

EXHIBIT A



Feds Seek to Limit Painkiller Use

Feds Seek to Limit Painkiller Availability

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In just five years, it has become one of the best-selling brand-name drugs in the world, topping even Viagra.

OxyContin has also become one of the nation's most abused drugs, linked to more than 100 fatal overdoses in the country.

Now the Drug Enforcement Agency is asking the drug's manufacturer to market the drug only to pain specialists as a way to help prevent its illegal use.

The agency also is in discussions with Purdue Pharma, L.P., of Stamford, Conn., to modify its claim that OxyContin may be less prone to abuse than similar narcotics. The DEA is also suggesting that the company reformulate the medication so it is not so prone to abuse.

The agency, along with the Food and Drug Administration, only has authority to make recommendations. It cannot force the company to change its policy.

A Quick, Strong High

Approved in 1995 by the FDA as a moderate-to-severe painkiller, abusers can snort it, shoot it or take it orally. Abusers like the drug because they can get a powerful morphine-like high by chewing or crushing the pills, short-circuiting the drugs intended, slow time-release protection.

The drug's active ingredient is oxycodone, a morphine-like substance that is found in Percodan and Tylox, other painkillers. While Tylox contains five milligrams of oxycodone, OxyContin contains 40 to 160 milligrams in a time-released formula that controls pain for a longer period of time.

Abusers get prescriptions for the drug by visiting internists or family practice doctors and pretending to be in pain. Some physicians may give patients prescriptions for the painkiller because the patients' act can be very convincing.

Pharmacies also have been targeted by people seeking the drug. A rash of thefts in Maine prompted several drug-store chains to stop selling the drug. A thief in Ohio recently made off with \$50,000 worth of OxyContin.

DEA spokeswoman Rogene Waite says limiting the drug to pain specialists would cut back on the drug's widespread availability but would still allow people who need it to get it.

"We don't want to stop the drug's availability to those people who are in severe pain, like terminal cancer patients, and could benefit from it," Waite says.

Manufacturer Defends Drug's Availability

The manufacturer of the drug, which made more than a \$1 billion last year from its sales, believes the blame lies with the abusers and not the drug.

"When drug abusers determine the medical care for the rest of us that is a travesty," says Dr. David Haddox, Purdue's medical director.

On the company Web site, the firm says it has taken several actions to limit the problem of prescription drug abuse, including giving brochures to pharmacists and doctors, developing tamper-resistant prescription pads, meeting with law enforcement officials and funding a study to prevent patients who "shop for doctors" who prescribe the drug.

A Nationwide Problem

Federal officials say no prescription drug in the last 20 years has been so widely abused so soon after its release, wreaking havoc on many communities, especially Hazard, a town in eastern Kentucky

More than half the inmates at a local county jail are in for OxyContin-related crimes. And there aren't enough beds to treat all the abusers in the area.

"We could fill all the treatment beds in the state of Kentucky with the OxyContin problem in this area," says Wilma Terry, who runs one of only a half dozen rehabilitation clinics in eastern Kentucky.

In February, federal and state agents posed as OxyContin dealers and rounded up more than 200 people in the area, the largest drug bust in Kentucky history.

Kentucky is not alone in having a problem with OxyContin. The Associated Press reports the governor of Alabama announced a task force targeting prescription drugs, with special attention on OxyContin, and the medical examiner in Palm Beach County, Fla., is examining whether the drug was responsible for 14 deaths last month in the county.

DEA says it is only a matter of time before every community in this country is confronted with the problem of OxyContin abuse. No prescription drug in the last 20 years has been so widely abused after its release, federal officials say.

"This is the most serious and rapid abuse that we've seen in decades," says Terry Woodworth, DEA deputy director.

ABCNEWS' Geoff Morell of NewsOne Chicago and ABCNEWS.com's Robin Eisner contributed to this report.

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